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Evaluating the Legacies of State-building: Success, Failure and the Role of Responsibility

Oisín Tansey

Abstract

What impact do international state-building missions have on the domestic politics of states they seek to build, and how can we measure this impact with confidence? This article seeks to address these questions and challenge some existing approaches that often appear to assume that state-builders leave lasting legacies rather than demonstrating such influence with the use of carefully chosen empirical evidence. Too often, domestic conditions that follow in the wake of international state-building are assumed to follow *as a result* of international intervention, usually due to insufficient attention to the causal processes that link international actions to domestic outcomes. The article calls for greater appreciation of the methodological challenges to establishing causal inferences regarding the legacies of state-building, and identifies three qualitative methodological strategies – process tracing, counterfactual analysis and the use of control cases - that can be used to improve confidence in causal claims about state-building legacies. The article concludes with a case study of international state-building in East Timor, highlighting several flaws of existing evaluations of the United Nations' role in East Timor and identifying the critical role that domestic actors play even in the context of authoritative international intervention.

What impact do international state-building missions have on the domestic politics of states they seek to build, and how can we measure this impact with confidence? These questions are fundamental to the goal of evaluating state-building success and failure, yet existing approaches too often appear to assume that state-builders leave lasting legacies rather than demonstrating the existence of such legacies with the use of carefully chosen empirical evidence. Consequently, state-building missions are often declared to have succeeded or failed based on the identification of simple correlations, where political developments that follow international intervention are taken to be the result *of* that intervention.

This article seeks to challenge existing approaches to the evaluation of international state-building and advocates greater engagement with questions of causal inference in the state-building literature. Robust evaluations of state-building success or failure can only be made if it is first ascertained that the international mission is *causally responsible* for the conditions on the ground being used to measure success or failure; it makes no sense to evaluate an international mission using agreed 'standards of success' if the indicators being measured are the result of domestic rather than international efforts. This in turn requires a concern with the causal mechanisms that link international actions to domestic-level outcomes, and requires consideration of appropriate methodological strategies. In short, we can only judge the success or failure of an international mission when we are confident that the domestic political events we are using as indicators of success or failure are the legacies of the international mission rather than other factors, and we can only achieve this confidence when we establish in as rigorous a fashion as

possible what domestic conditions the international mission is itself causally responsible for bringing about.

The overall argument of the article is that we need to be more systematic in our efforts to evaluate the legacies of international state-building missions, and that if we are, we see that the legacies of international operations are often fewer than has been widely suggested in the literature. When more emphasis is placed on identifying the causal mechanisms that lead from international actions to domestic outcomes, it is often clear that international influence is overshadowed by the primacy of domestic politics.

The article proceeds in three overall sections. The first section examines existing efforts to evaluate international legacies and state-building success and failure, and highlights some of the problems that stand in the way of making robust causal assessments. The second section addresses the issue of political responsibility, and argues that we can only reasonably evaluate international operations based on consideration of the domestic conditions for which they are causally responsible. It also identifies three qualitative methodological strategies through which such responsibility can be more confidently established, namely process tracing, counterfactual analysis and the use of control cases. The final section of the paper examines the case of East Timor and identifies two causal arguments from the literature regarding the impact of the UN presence. The methodological flaws of each argument are identified, and process tracing and counterfactual analysis are used to suggest alternative legacies of state-building in East Timor that place greater emphasis on the role of domestic rather than international actors.

Evaluating State-building Success and Failure

Paris and Sisk define state-building as a 'sub-component of peace-building' that is concerned with 'the strengthening or construction of legitimate governmental

institutions in countries that are emerging from conflicts'.[1] In much of the state-building literature, the state is seen not just as a tax generating agency or provider of basic public services, but as a body of institutions that claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of force and can be authoritative enough to mediate disputes among societal groups and, ideally, command their loyalty and compliance. If state-building is to have any hope of building peace, it is a state whose institutions must combine both authority and legitimacy.[2]

A key goal within the literatures on peace-building and state-building is to establish the effect of international state-building operations on the domestic politics of state formation, and to evaluate the success or failure of these missions accordingly.[3] However, there is no consensus regarding which standards of success and failure should be used, and approaches range from those that have relatively low standards of success to those that require major achievements in order for a positive assessment to be granted.

Charles Call identifies four standards for success that appear regularly in the literature.[4] The first, minimalist approach concerns the question of whether war has recurred after the international authorities have left, and simply requires that the original conflict that led to the international intervention not re-emerge in the early years after the

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1 Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, 'Introduction' in Paris and Sisk (eds) *The Dilemmas of State-building: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London and New York, Routledge: 2009), p.14.

2 See also Charles T. Call, 'Ending Wars, Building States', in Charles T. Call with Vanessa Wyeth (eds) *Building States to Build Peace* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2008), p.7.

3 Although this article is concerned primarily with the evaluation of large-scale international state-building missions, its arguments apply equally to other forms of intervention such as peace-keeping and peace-building. For recent assessments of state-building, and peace-building, missions, see Mats Berdal, *Building Peace After War* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2009), Paris and Sisk, 'Dilemmas of State-building', Charles T. Call and Vanessa Wyeth (eds), *Building States to Build Peace*, (Lynne Rienner, 2008), and Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006).

4 Charles T. Call, 'Knowing Peace When You See It: Setting Standards for Peace-building Success', *Civil Wars*, Volume 10, No.2, 2008, pp.173-194.

international withdrawal. The second standard is more exacting, and involves identifying the root causes of the conflict and establishing whether they have been resolved by the international mission's presence. The third standard goes beyond issues of conflict resolution and involves a measure of whether an effective state or legitimate political regime exists after the mission's end. Finally, the fourth standard uses the extent of economic recovery as a measure for mission success, and includes indicators such as GDP and poverty levels.

There is, however, no agreement on which of these standards should be used, and debates revolve around the level at which to set each standard and which combination of standards to use. Call himself finds that including considerations of the resolution of root causes, or the attainment of economic recovery, to be excessive, and warns against 'overburdening' success with multiple and unachievable goals.[5] Susan Woodward similarly argues against measuring success based on assessment of whether roots causes of the conflict have been resolved, not least because such causes are often contested by the parties to the conflict itself.[6] Roland Paris takes as his standard of success the indicator that a 'stable and lasting peace' has been achieved, while Downs and Stedman, argue for a less exacting standard, and use as their key measure of success whether large-scale violence has been brought to an end while the international authorities are present.[7]

This discussion and debate about standards of measurements cuts to a key issue in evaluating the legacies of international interventions, as it provides sustained attention to

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Susan Woodard, 'Do the Root Causes of Civil War Matter? On Using Knowledge to Improve Peace-building Interventions', *Journal of Intervention and State-building*, Vol.1, Issue 2, 2007, pp.143-170

[7] George Downs and Stephen John Stedman 'Evaluation Issues in Peace Implementation' in Stephen John Stedman, Donald Rothchild and Elizabeth M. Cousens (eds) *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements* (Lynne Rienner, 2002), p.49; Roland Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.56. In his more recent work, Paris has suggested an alternative measure of evaluation, namely whether host countries are 'better off than they would have been without such missions'. See Roland Paris, 'Saving Liberal Peacebuilding', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.36, 20120, p.352.

the outcomes we expect international authorities to be able to provide and suggests a way of evaluating the performance of those international actors. Yet even if this debate were resolved, and consensus emerged on a common set of standards, there is also the further difficult challenge of establishing that the political conditions on the ground are the result of the international activities being evaluated. Even if all scholars were to agree that there should be a minimal standard of an absence of conflict at the point of international withdrawal, we can only count such an absence of conflict as an international success if we can be confident that it *results from* international activities, and does not exist independently of them, or even despite them. In other words, the challenge is to determine that any correlation between the presence of an international mission and the presence of the chosen indicators of success is one that is based on causation rather than chance.

However, there are serious obstacles to meeting this challenge, and strategies aimed at demonstrating causal connections have to overcome a number of difficulties. Downs and Stedman have already identified a number of obstacles to the evaluation of international effects: the passage of time tends to erode the potential for robust causal inference, international and domestic variables interact in often complex ways that are difficult to untangle, state-building involves a multiplicity of actors that adds further complexity, and evaluation must also take into account the diversity of starting points within each host country.[8] Other obstacles to making robust causal inferences include the large number of variables at work in every case, the relatively small number of state-building cases that can be included in any single analysis, and the problem that there can be multiple paths to the same outcome (also known as the problem of equifinality).[9]

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[8] See in particular Downs and Stedman, 'Evaluation Issues in Peace Implementation', and Roland Paris, *At War's End*, pp.55-62.

[9] The article is primarily concerned with qualitative work on evaluating state-building missions. For a discussion of wider challenges to the development of causal inferences in case study research, see Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the*

Each of these challenges represents an obstacle to be overcome, and as a result there are difficulties in establishing with confidence the political impact of international operations. However, the literatures on peace-building and state-building have been lacking in their engagement in methodological debates, and thus include some arguments regarding international influence in these contexts that do not fully take into account the challenges of causal inference. Some of the early, important and influential contributions to the state-building literature did not engage in methodological issues,[10] and some of the recent case study literature has also neglected discussion of the challenges to and methods of establishing causal inference.[11] Partly as a result, the literature is thus somewhat theoretically under-developed, and often fails to specify the causal mechanisms that link international missions with their putative legacies.[12]

One key problem that is sometimes seen in the literature is simply the conflation of correlation with causation, and the assumption, made by virtue of an international intervention having taken place, that a particular outcome of interest is the result of international action. Beate Jahn, for example, cites the liberal nature of international interventionism as the key explanatory factor in accounting for problematic domestic politics is a wide range of cases, and in so doing priorities international actors and actions as the primary source of domestic political outcomes in these settings. Jahn bases her analysis on a broad survey of the political conditions in many cases that have experienced international intervention, and asserts, without exploring the detail of each case, that the

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Social Sciences (MIT Press, 2005). For a debate about the optimal strategies for establishing causal inference, see Gary King, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Scientific Inference* (Princeton University Press, 1994) and Henry E. Brady and David Collier (eds), *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse tools, shared standards*, (Lanham, Md. ; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

[10] See Richard Caplan, *International Governance of War-Torn Territories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Simon Chesterman, *You, the People: The United Nations, Transitional Administration and State-Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[11] See for example Mats Berdal and Spyros Economides (eds), *United Nations Interventionism 1991-2004* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[12] For similar criticisms relating to the peacekeeping literature, see Virginia Page Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work: Shaping Belligerents' Choices After War* (Princeton University Press, 2008), pp.2/3.

conditions identified are the result of international rather than domestic factors (and specifically the liberal nature of the intervention).[13] In other cases, authors have written case studies that are too short to allow for a full exploration of causal connections,[14] or that are overly descriptive and do not explicitly identify the causal mechanisms linking international actions to domestic outcomes.[15]

A similar problem is present in some efforts to establish the success or failure of individual international missions. In some treatments of this issue, the body of discussion is given over to the debate concerning the choice of indicators of success and failure, and the challenge of making a causal connection between the measures of success and the missions being evaluated is given little or no attention. It is often assumed, rather than demonstrated, that the domestic conditions being measured with the chosen indicators are causally related to the international mission being evaluated. Charles Call's recent evaluation of peace-building missions, for example, scores over twenty UN missions as success or failures, but does so without any significant discussion of the causal links between the UN's actions and the outcomes being measured.[16] A similar study by Zuercher correlates different types of international intervention with a range of benchmarks of success in seventeen cases, but also lacks a discussion of causal mechanisms that could demonstrate a clear chain of causal responsibility.[17] Both Call and Zuercher provide excellent discussions of the challenges to selecting appropriate indicators of measurement, but neither complements these discussions with

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[13] Beate Jahn, 'The Tragedy of Liberal Diplomacy: Democratization, Intervention, State-building', *Journal of Intervention and State-building*, Part I, Volume 1, No.1, 87-106; Part II, Volume 1, No.2, 2007, 211-29.
[14] For example, see Roland Paris, *At War's End.*
[15] For example, Berdal and Economides (eds) *United Nations Interventionism* and Charles T. Call and Vanessa Wyeth (eds), *Building States to Build Peace*, (Lynne Rienner, 2008).
[16] Call, 'Knowing Peace When You See It'.
[17] Christoph Zuercher, 'Is More Better? Evaluating External-Led State Building After 1989', CDDRL Working Paper, No.54, 2006.

corresponding coverage of the methodological challenges of making causal links between the chosen indicators of both dependent and independent variables.

A problematic by-product of these approaches is that international factors tend to be prioritised over domestic factors, and domestic actors and structures are often thus marginalised from the causal story. Once the chosen standards of success or failure are measured, their value is too quickly attributed to the international presence, and domestic variables are often given little attention. In the most extreme cases, characterisations of international state-building as occupations or cases of empire tend to prioritise the international impact and minimise the role for the independent agency of domestic actors,[18] who even in the most authoritative of international administration missions have retained extensive de facto political authority.[19]

It is important to note, however, that these flaws are not found throughout the literature and that there are some efforts to discuss methodological issues and to incorporate domestic actors into theoretical accounts of international influence. Several works on peace-building and state-building include dedicated discussions of methodological issues concerning causal inference.[20] Miles Kahler has also written of a revisionist perspective on state-building that incorporates greater attention to political factors beyond international control,[21] and there are several theoretically driven accounts of peace-building and state-building that seek to combine international and domestic

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[18] See David Chandler, *Empire in Denial: The Politics of State-building* (London: Pluto Press, 2006); Mark Duffield, *Development, Security and Unending War* (London: Polity, 2007).

[19] One the potent role of domestic actors during international administration, see Oisín Tansey, *Democratic Regime-Building: Democratization and International Administration* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

[20] Lise Morje Howard, *UN Peacekeeping after Civil Wars* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace*; Paris, *At War's End*; and Stedman et al, *Ending Civil Wars*.

[21] Miles Kahler, 'State-building After Afghanistan and Iraq', in Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, *The Dilemmas of State-building: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (Routledge, 2009).

factors.[22] Yet in much of the literature causal claims are frequently made about international operations that are not supported by sufficient discussion of the empirical evidence, often in ways that over-estimate the extent of international influence. The following section examines how the interplay between domestic and actors can be examined empirically and demonstrated more rigorously, and highlights the importance of locating the chains of political responsibility through the careful selection of appropriate research methods.

Identifying Causal Responsibility: Approaches and Tools

The central argument of this paper is that it is only reasonable to evaluate international state-building operations on the basis of the domestic conditions for which they are causally responsible. Political responsibility is a vague and contested concept, and there are several approaches to the idea of responsibility. Political philosophers make a distinction between three types of responsibility:

- causal responsibility (A is causally responsible for X when A has caused X),
- moral responsibility (A is morally responsible for X when she is blameworthy or praiseworthy for X)
- responsibility understood as an *obligation* (A is responsible for X in the sense that A has some obligations with regard to X).[23]

Evaluations about state-building success and failure tend to entail judgements about both causal and moral responsibility. When an individual state-building operation is evaluated and held either to be a success or a failure, that evaluation both assumes a causal

[22] See for example Howard, *UN Peacekeeping after Civil Wars*; Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace*; and Michael Barnett and Christoph Zürcher, 'The Peacebuilder's Contract: How External State-building Reinforces Weak Statehood' in Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, *The Dilemmas of State-building.*

[23] This three-part distinction is taken directly from Carl Knight and Zofia Stemplowska, *Responsibility and Distributive Justice* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

relationship between the international mission and the domestic conditions on the ground (e.g. the mission helped put an end to conflict, or alternatively contributed to the outbreak of new conflict) and that the mission should be evaluated with some consideration of moral responsibility in mind (e.g. the mission is praised as a success, or blamed as a failure).

The contention here is that establishing causal responsibility is a prior step to establishing moral responsibility, and as such those who seek to evaluate the success and failure of international intervention missions have a responsibility (as obligation) of their own to demonstrate that the judgement is based on a carefully considered and empirically supported account of the causal connection between the international actors and the domestic conditions that are being used as indicators of success or failure. While the literature includes extensive discussions regarding the standards of success or failure that should be used, there is much less discussion of the methodological implications of linking such standards to the international operations being evaluated. Consequently, the risk of conflating correlation with causation, and thus misattributing success or failure, is high.

The central problem can be highlighted with a hypothetical example. Consider a small state that has been subject to an extensive UN international state-building mission due to its experiences of conflict and state weakness. After three years of involvement, the international mission is withdrawn and the country in question is at peace and has re-established basic levels of state capacity. Consider further that three years after the international withdrawal, the country is hit by a devastating hurricane, and much of its state infrastructure is destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of people are rendered homeless and the economy all but collapses. Food shortages and lack of adequate housing lead to civil unrest, opportunistic political leaders mobilize their constituencies along partisan lines, and the country steadily descends into a prolonged state of political instability

marked by weak institutions, regime instability and civil conflict. Five years after the UN international mission has withdrawn, a team of political scientists examines the conditions within the country, and on the basis of a set of widely used standards of evaluation, declares the original UN operation to have been a failure.

The example is an exaggerated caricature, but it nonetheless highlights the central challenge to evaluating the legacies of state-building. The key obstacle is not one of finding agreement on the standards of measurement, but rather of demonstrating that what is being evaluated is actually causally related to what is being measured. As the fictional example suggests, methodological strategies have to be employed that allow us to distinguish between the domestic conditions for which international actors can reasonably be said to be causally responsible, and those for which they are not. There are several methodological strategies that can be used to achieve such aims, and to enhance assessments of international peace-building and state-building operations. Three qualitative methodological strategies in particular – counterfactual analysis, process tracing and the use of control cases – can be helpful in exploring chains of causality. Each of these approaches is well established and well covered in an increasingly broad and diverse literature on qualitative methodology.[24] However, there is greater scope for the incorporation and development of these methodological techniques in certain sectors of the state-building literature.

Causal mechanisms and process tracing

One increasingly prominent avenue for improving causal arguments is to rely on the method of within-case analysis, and in particular, process tracing. The process tracing

[24] For a review, see Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, 'Qualitative Research: Recent Developments in Case Study Methods', *Annual Review of Political Science*, Volume 9, 2006, pp.455-476.

method was first developed over two decades ago,[25] but has been most comprehensively outlined and developed in George and Bennett's influential text, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. At the heart of the Bennett and George approach is a concern with developing and testing theory in ways that incorporate attention to the causal processes at work in political life, to the *causal mechanisms* that link causes to effects. The authors argue that causal mechanisms are central to causal explanation, and that case studies and process tracing are the methods best able to examine the operation of causal mechanisms in detail.[26] As the authors write:

> In process tracing, the researcher examines histories, archival documents, interview transcripts, and other sources to see whether the causal process a theory hypothesizes or implies in a case is in fact evident in the sequence and values of the intervening variables in that case.[27]

> The process tracing method attempts to identify the intervening causal process – the causal chain and causal mechanism -- between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable.[28]

In cases of major international intervention the boundaries between international and domestic action often become blurred, but by using the process tracing method it is at least possible to highlight where political developments were generated primarily by

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[25] See Alexander L. George, "The Causal Nexus Between Cognitive Beliefs and Decision-Making Behavior: The 'Operational Code' Belief System," in Lawrence S. Falkowski, ed., *Psychological Models in International Politics* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1979), pp. 95–124; Alexander L. George and Timothy J. McKeown, "Case Studies and Theories of Organizational Decision Making," in *Advances in Information Processing in Organizations* 2 (JAI Press, 1985), 21-58.
[26] George and Bennett, pp.12, 21.
[27] ibid, p.6.
[28] ibid, p.206.

domestic or international actors, or a combination of both. Rather than basing conclusions on the existence of international missions and certain outcomes of interest (i.e. conclusions that rest on correlation), process tracing focuses on identifying the causation behind the correlation and tracing the international influence over time and in particular issue areas. Specific causal statements about the impact of international missions are therefore strengthened if they are accompanied by an account of the causal mechanisms that lead from international action to domestic outcome, and thus demonstrate the extent to which international state-building operations are causally responsible for the domestic conditions of interest.

Process tracing has been criticised for being little more than historical narrative, but there are ways of ensuring it has theoretical value. Bennett and Elman argue that there are four elements to good process tracing. First, the account of events should run from a suitably chosen beginning to the end of the story and should not present only a partial timeframe taken from a wider process of interest. Second, process tracing accounts that have fewer (and preferably no) breaks in the causal story are to be favoured over those that have many. Third, any process tracing account will suggest evidence that should be found if the account is true, and accounts are thus strong when their key causal links are supported by strong evidence. Finally, confidence in specific explanations can be increased if process tracing finds evidence that is inconsistent with alternative explanations. Even if this evidence doesn't directly support the causal links being advanced, it may nonetheless strengthen the overall account by ruling out competing explanations.[29]

Many case studies of state-building provide the kind of empirical evidence that is perfectly suited to process tracing, but fall short of utilising the method in full due to the

[29] Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, 'Qualitative Research: Recent Developments in Case Study Methods', *Annual Review of Political Science*, Volume 9, 2006, pp.455-476.

absence of any attempt to explore a clearly articulated causal relationship between variables and identify a clear set of causal mechanisms. For process tracing to be useful, it must be a theoretically driven pursuit that either develops or tests a theoretical proposition about the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

Counterfactual analysis

A second way in which to increase confidence in causal statements is through counterfactual analysis. Counterfactual strategies involve thought experiments that explore what would most likely have taken place if events from the past had transpired differently. Their use can help clarify causal arguments, although their application also has limited scope given their inherently hypothetical nature. As Lebow summarises, 'Counterfactual experiments vary attributes of context or the presence or value of variables and analyze how these changes would have affected outcomes. In history and political science these outcomes are always uncertain because we can neither predict the future nor rerun the tape of history.'[30]

The logic of using counterfactual analysis comes from the need to justify a claim that a given cause produced a given effect by stating that if the causal factor had been different, the outcome would also have been different.[31] In other words, any statement that X led to Y must also agree with the statement that, all other things being equal, Y would not have happened without X. One of the benefits of counterfactual analysis is that if the hypothesised alternative is not intuitive or persuasive, it leads one to question (and hopefully improve) the original causal argument. Discussions below suggest that the

[30] Richard Ned Lebow, 'What's so Different About a Counterfactual?', *World Politics* Vol.52, No.4, 2000, pp.550-585.
[31] Philip E. Tetlock and Aaron Belkin, 'Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics', in Tetlock and Belkin (eds), *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological and Psychological Perspectives* (Princeton University Press, 1996).

use of counterfactual analysis can raise important questions over causal claims made about UN legacies in East Timor, and including the proposition that the international mission contributed to the emergence of a one-party political system.

However, while counterfactuals can be useful, there are also some limits to their potential. Tetlock and Belkin identify a number of factors that strengthen the nature of counterfactual analysis, and suggest some counterfactual strategies to avoid. They argue that all elements of the counterfactual should be clearly and explicitly defined, so that assessment of changes in one variable can be more easily 'measured' in the hypothetical scenario. They also argue that there should be logical consistency in the proposed relationship between variables, and that this relationship is also consistent with existing theory on the subject matter. Importantly, they also emphasise the need to make minimal and plausible alterations to the historical record in order to explore the alternative possibilities. Large-scale changes to history may be interesting as thought experiments, but they change so many variables that it becomes hard to make plausible causal arguments.[32] Counterfactual analysis has been used sparingly in research on international interventions, but Downs and Stedman highlight its key contributions in evaluating international peace implementation missions, and show how the use of counterfactual analysis can lead to individual cases been reclassified as successes or failures.[33]

The Use of Control Cases

A final strategy that can be used is to select cases carefully in order to increase the strength of the causal arguments. Case selection is a major point of discussion in the qualitative methodology literature, and there are varying recommendations concerning the optimal strategy. One of the most influential prescriptions is not to select cases on

[32] Tetlock and Belkin, 'Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics'.
[33] See Downs and Stedman, 'Evaluation Issues in Peace Implementation', pp.50-52. The authors use counterfactual analysis on 16 cases of peace implementation and find that two of the 16 required reclassification as successes or failures as a result.

the dependent variable – that is, not to select cases that all have the same outcome of interest.[34] For example, this recommendation suggests it would be inadvisable to explain the causes of civil war with reference only to cases that have experienced civil wars. If this approach is taken, it is impossible to know if the purported causes of civil war were not also present in cases where war did not break out. If they were, the strength of the causal explanation would be considerably weakened.

A separate concern exists regarding the selection of cases that all have the same or similar levels of the independent variable of interest. If all cases have the causal variable of interest, and an argument is made about that variable's effect across the cases, it will not be possible to be certain that the same outcome did not also emerge in cases *without* the causal variable of interest. For example, Roland Paris' study of post-conflict peace-building avoids the first problem above by examining a series of cases of international peace-building that resulted in both renewed conflict and sustained peace.[35] Paris is not selecting on the dependent variable, as the cases include variation on the question of war recurrence. But he is selecting cases based on the independent variable, as all his cases experienced some form of international peace-building operation. There is no way of knowing, therefore, if the problems of instability that Paris associated with international peace-building did not also exist in cases where there was no attempt at liberal peace-building. Virginia Page Fortna has criticised the peace-building literature for this lack of comparison of peace-building cases with non-peace-building cases, and in her recent work has incorporated cases where peace-builders were never deployed into both her qualitative and quantitative analysis.[36]

The point here is not that any work that does not include control cases is inherently flawed, or that the literature has completely ignored this issue – it has not. Rather, the

[34] See especially, Barbara Geddes, 'How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics', *Political Analysis*, Vol.2, No.1, 1990, pp.131-150.
[35] Paris, *At War's End.*
[36] Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work.*

aim is to identify one further avenue by which case study analyses of international peace-building and state-building can strengthen their causal claims and develop more robust assessments of the domestic conditions that international missions are causally responsible for, and the legacies that they leave in their wake. These issues are addressed in some sectors of the literature, but are not acknowledged and taken into account as much as they could be.

The remainder of this article explores the issues raised above with reference to the case of East Timor, which has experienced successive UN missions since the late 1990s. The following sections explore existing arguments about the legacies of UNTAET, highlight problems with those arguments based in particular on their lack of attention to the causal chains of responsibility, and demonstrate the ways in which attention to process tracing, causal mechanisms and consideration of counterfactual scenarios can clarify the true legacies of international state-building efforts.

Evaluating International Legacies in East Timor

East Timor has been host to a series of international missions, and from 1999-2002 was subject to one of the most authoritative state-building operations in recent years, the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET).[37] A former Portuguese colony, East Timor was annexed by Indonesia in 1975 and ruled as an occupied territory from Jakarta until the late 1990s. However, after the East Timorese people voted overwhelming for independence in a 1999 referendum, intense Indonesian-sponsored violence erupted and the UN deployed an initial military force (INTERFET)

[37] UNTAET was immediately followed by a successor mission, UNMISET, the UN Mission of Support in East Timor. UNMISET itself was followed by a smaller support mission, the United Nations Office in Timor-Leste (UNOTIL), which in August 2006, and as a response to the 2006 crisis, was succeeded by the more robust UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT).

followed by a large-scale administration mission, UNTAET.[38] In late 1999, UNTAET replaced all authorities that previously had claims to the territory, including both Portugal and Indonesia, and East Timor officially came under the control of the UN. What followed was one of the most authoritative state-building missions in recent history. Established under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, UNTAET was empowered with overall responsibility for the administration of East Timor and the exercise of all legislative and executive authority, and was mandated to deal with a wide range of security, political and economic issues.[39]

By the time UNTAET withdrew in May 2002, fundamental change had taken place in the East Timorese political context. The key issue of East Timor's status was resolved, with independence finally guaranteed and recognised internationally, while political violence had ceased to be an immediate concern and a nascent democratic political regime had been put in place.[40] In May 2002, it thus seemed as if East Timor had made significant progress towards a successful political transition, and a widespread view developed that it had been one of the UN's most successful missions. The UN praised its own achievements in East Timor,[41] and several academic analyses also declared the UN missions as successful. Doyle and Sambanis classed UNTAET as a commendable UN success, suggesting that the international mission prepared Timor well for independence and demonstrated what the right mandate could achieve when combined

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[38] For the political history of East Timor in the years before UN intervention, see Peter Carey and G. Cater Bentley, (eds), *East Timor at the Crossroads: The Forging of a Nation* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1995).

[39] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1272, S/RES/1272, 25 October 1999.

[40] For treatments of the UNTAET years, see Simon Chesterman, 'East Timor in Transition: Self-Determination, State-building, and the United Nations', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.9, No.1, 2002, pp.45-76 and Dominik Zaum, *The Sovereignty Paradox: The Norms and Politics of International State-building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) Chapter 5.

[41] See BBC News, 'E Timor independence: Annan's speech', 20 May 2002, www.news.bbc.co.uk

with sufficient resources.[42] Similarly, Lise Morje Howard includes East Timor as one of several successful UN operations in her comparative study of post-war peacekeeping.[43]

Yet not all commentators were so positive, and two issues in particular led to critical evaluations of the UN legacy.[44] The first issue concerned a perceived drift towards authoritarian politics within East Timor. As the primary political movement behind the resistance to the Indonesian occupation, the political party FRETILIN (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) was in a position to translate its profile and popularity into electoral success in the wake of the Indonesian withdrawal. By gaining 55 of the 88 seats in the first Constituent Assembly elections of 2001, FRETILIN held sufficient power to dominate the assembly's business, and subsequently raised concerns about its democratic credentials.[45] The second issue concerned the fragility of East Timor's state structures, which was most clearly revealed in 2006, when a rebellion in the armed forces developed into a generalised breakdown of law and order and near collapse of state authority. The crisis prompted a change of government, the deployment of a new Australian and New Zealand-led International Stabilization Force, and the establishment of a new UN peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT). The remainder of this article addresses two separate arguments that have been made about the perceived legacies of the UN presence in these

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42 Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace,* pp.198/9, 255/6.
43 Howard, *UN Peacekeeping after Civil Wars.*
44 The two sets of arguments explored here do not represent the full range of criticisms of the UN presence in East Timor. For others, see Jarat Chopra, 'The UN's Kingdom in East Timor', *Survival*, Vol.42, No.3, 2000; Tanja Hohe, 'The Clash of Paradigms: International Administration and Local Political Legitimacy in East Timor', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Volume 24, Number 3, December 2002, pp.569-589.
45 For some critical commentary on the FRETILIN government's legislative record on civil and political rights, see Freedom House, 'Countries at the Crossroads 2010: Country Report - East Timor'. Available at freedomhouse.org.

areas, and uses process tracing and counterfactual analysis to raise questions over existing evaluations of the UN's legacies in East Timor.[46]

An Authoritarian Legacy? Questioning the UN's electoral impact

One argument that seeks to hold the UN presence causally responsible for some of the perceived ills of the East Timorese state suggests that the UN facilitated the emergence of a dominant one-party system that featured elements of authoritarian rule. East Timor's 2001 elections were held during UNTAET's tenure, and led to the election of FRETILIN as the largest political party with 55 out of 88 seats in the then Constituent Assembly, which subsequently became the first parliament of the independent state. For some, FRETILIN's dominance was partly the result of the UN mission itself, which was alleged to have facilitated its extensive victory.[47] According to Peter Carey, 'political parties were allowed to re-emerge and this opened the way for FRETILIN dominance of the legislative process...Far from seeding democracy, the UN ushered in a one-party state'.[48]

Similarly, Oliver Richmond and Jason Franks argue that democracy was undermined 'even under UN guidance'.[49] According to the authors:

> "The outcome has been an unrepresentative and dictatorial state government. This familiar occurrence represents both a failure of the internationals, who were

[46] As the empirical contribution of this article is focused only on one case, it is not appropriate in this instance to explore the strategy of employing control cases discussed above.
[47] Simon Chesterman, 'East Timor' in Berdal and Economides, *United Nations Interventionism*, p.215.
[48] See Peter Carey with Pat Walsh, 'The Security Counil and the Question of East Timor', in Vaughan Lowe, Adam Roberts, Jennifer Welsh, and Dominik Zaum (eds), *The United Nations Security Council and War The Evolution of Thought and Practice since 1945*; and Peter Carey, 'East Timor: Sectarian Violence and the Challenge of Nation-building', 31 January 2007, *The Word*, available at: http://www.theword.ie/cms/publish/article_500.shtml
[49] Oliver P. Richmond and Jason Franks, 'Liberal Peace-building in Timor Leste: The Emperor's New Clothes?' *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.15, No.2, 2008, p.194.

> desperate for a positive result and early exit, and of local elites, who failed to implement an inclusive, power-sharing approach. Yet, clearly, the major local actor *was provided with the authority to circumvent democracy* by marginalizing other actors and instituting a one-party regime."[50]

Richmond and Franks's analysis, however, is flawed on two counts. First, it exaggerates the anti-democratic nature of the actions that Fetilin pursued. By suggesting that FRETILIN 'stage[d] a 'palace coup', albeit under the auspices of a democratic election, to ensure its domination of political power', the authors stretch the meaning of the idea of coup beyond breaking point. Similarly, by citing as another indicator of FRETILIN's anti-democratic tendencies its move to give itself 'a stranglehold over the state by assigning most key cabinet positions to party members',[51] Oliver and Franks present as malign a practice that is normally accepted as convention in parliamentary democracies: the right of the government to appoint the cabinet from among the ranks of the ruling party. Their criticism also neglects to acknowledge that FRETILIN's first post-election cabinet had many non-party members.[52]

Second, the authors share with Carey the view that the development of a perceived one-party regime in East Timor was partly a legacy of the United Nations, which allowed and ushered in a form of authoritarian rule. However, there are two problems with this analysis which directly correspond to the fallacies discussed earlier in the article. First, the respective authors do not clearly specify the causal connections that link UN actions to the election outcome. Oliver and Franks point to two factors relating to the UN that affected the situation. First, they observe that the UN did not recognize Timor's pro-independence coalition movement, the CNRT, as its main partner in East Timor when it

[50] Emphasis added – although the authors are not explicit here, the clear implication is that FRETILIN was provided the authority to undermine democracy by the UN.
[51] Oliver and Franks, 'Liberal Peace-building in Timor Leste' p.192
[52] See Tansey, *Regime-Building*, pp.75/6.

arrived,[53] and that this 'allowed' the CNRT to develop its own parallel political structures on the ground that were later hijacked by FRETILIN.[54] But the causal chain here does not clearly show why or how the UN mission facilitated FRETILIN's use of CNRT's political structures, and nor does it account for the fact that FRETILIN, as the historic pro-independence party of East Timor, had its own well developed party structures independent of the CNRT. Second, they suggest the UN's desire for results and an early exit contributed to the situation,[55] although again it is not made explicit *how* this affected domestic politics. The timing of the elections is not explicitly connected to the election outcome with reference to any evidence that would suggest a causal chain. Both arguments thus fail to provide a sufficiently clear account of how the UN's actions ultimately affected the domestic political outcomes that have been identified, and the causal chain is unclear as a result. As discussed above, a greater emphasis on the causal mechanisms involved, supported by the use of process tracing to provide a fuller account of the causal chain, would provide a superior causal story that would lend more support to the final evaluation being presented.

Such an approach suggests that the causal story that led to the dominant performance of FRETILIN in the 2001 elections is not one that contains a significant role for the UN. Certainly UNTAET played a major role in East Timorese politics in general during the pre-election period, but the dominant electoral results achieved by FRETILIN have much more to do with domestic political dynamics than they do with the international presence. A closer examination of the political competition in the run-up to the election, as well as the occupation-era resistance period, suggests that

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[53] The National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT) was an umbrella coalition representing almost all of the political parties in the territory, as well as the Catholic Church, and had a firmly pro-independence stance.

[54] Oliver and Franks, 'Liberal Peace-building in Timor Leste', p.192. A similar point is made by Edith Bowles and Tanja Chopra, 'East Timor: State-building Revisited', in Charles T. Call and Vanessa Wyeth (eds), *Building States to Build Peace*, (Lynne Rienner, 2008).

[55] Oliver and Franks, 'Liberal Peace-building in Timor Leste', p.194.

FRETILIN was always likely to perform well in any open electoral contest in Timor, and that the UN had little role to play in shaping inter-party competition between 1999 and 2001. Despite suggestions that the UN somehow ushered in a one-party system, it was FRETILIN popular support and organizational advantages than guaranteed its successes against its rival parties.

A key point here is that the dissolution of the CNRT was effectively inevitable. As an umbrella group of disparate political parties, the CNRT's principal point of political cohesion was the struggle for independence.[56] Once independence was within sight and elections were called, personal and ideological disagreements arose that reflected long-standing political divisions among the Timorese elite.[57] At the outset of the resistance against Indonesian occupation, FRETILIN became the central actor of the political resistance and its paramilitary wing FALINTIL (Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor) led the armed resistance. However, in the 1980s Xanana Gusmão became the leader of the armed resistance, and began a process of military and political reorganisation that would leave enduring legacies. Gusmão distanced himself from the Marxist revolutionary ideology of much of the FRETILIN leadership, including Timor's first post-independence Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri, and sought instead to emphasise the need for national unity and democracy. In 1986 he helped establish and became President of the National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRM – replaced in 1998 by the CNRT), which sought to present a united front against Indonesian occupation and included a coalition of Timorese parties with civil society groups. In

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[56] Sarah Niner, 'A Long Journey of Resistance: The Origins and Struggle of CNRT' in Richard Tanter, Mark Selden and Stephen R. Shalom, *Bitter Flowers, Sweet Flowers: East Timor, Indonesia and the World Community* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001). See also Dionisio Babo Soares, 'Political Developments Leading to The Referendum' in James F. Fox and Dionísio Babo Soares, *Out of the Ashes: Destruction and Reconstruction of East Timor* (Adelaide: Crawford House Publishing, 2000).

[57] See Geoffrey Robinson, 'With UNAMET in East Timor: An Historian's Perspective', in Richard Tanter, Mark Selden and Stephen R. Shalom, *Bitter Flowers, Sweet Flowers: East Timor, Indonesia and the World Community* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001).

1987, Gusmão sought to further decouple the resistance movement from the FRETILIN party, as he publicly rejected the Marxist ideology of FRETILIN and, within a year, removed FALINTIL from organisational control of the party.[58] The legacies of this rift with FRETILIN were still being felt after 1999,[59] and few observers felt that Xanana Gusmão and Mari Alkatiri would be willing to work together in a unity government led by the CNRT.[60]

Once the Indonesian forces had departed, these divisions quickly led to tensions within the CNRT coalition. The struggle between Xanana Gusmão's wish for a CNRT national unity movement and the political parties' wish for autonomy came to a head in during a contentious CNRT Congress held in Dili in August 2000, in which FRETILIN voted against many of the tabled resolutions.[61] FRETILIN was particularly unhappy with the results of leadership elections at the Congress, in which Xanana Gusmão was elected as President and José Ramos-Horta and Mario Carrascalão were elected as Vice-Presidents. Senior FRETILIN figures such as Mari Alkatiri and Francisco 'Lu Olo' Guterres were shut out from the leadership, and the party withdrew from CNRT in protest shortly after the Congress.[62] The CNRT itself dissolved before the 2001 elections, and its demise thus had much more to do with internal political rivalries than any policy of the UN.

Similarly, in the post-CNRT environment the political dominance of FRETILIN is more attributable to its own history and record rather than through any intervention of the UNTAET mission. Once FRETILIN withdrew from CNRT, it could rely on its own

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58 For a full outline of the evolution of the resistance, see *Chega! The Report of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste (CAVR)*, especially Part 5: Resistance: Structure and Strategy. Available at www.cavr-timorleste.org

59 See Dennis Shoesmith, 'Timor-Leste: Divided Leadership in a Semi-Presidential System' *Asian Survey*, Vol.XLIII, No.2, March/April 2003, pp.231-252.

60 Interviews with José Teixera and senior UN officials, Dili, September 2010.

61 Babo-Soares, Dionísio. 'Successes, Weaknesses and Challenges: A Critical Overview of the Political Transition in East Timor', Council for Asia Europe Co-operation Conference, October, 2001.

62 Ibid, and interview with José Teixera, senior FRETILIN MP, Dili, September 2010.

long-standing political structures within Timor, as well as its unique position in the country as the only political party with a long-standing pro-independence stance.[63] FRETILIN was the party most closely associated with the independence struggle and thus had a cachet that could not be matched by its rivals. In the new political context in Timor, FRETILIN thus stood out as the CNRT waned. Although new political parties also emerged to challenge FRETILIN during 2000 and 2001, they lacked historical roots of any kind and were thus seeking to establish themselves as political movements over a relatively short period of time before the elections. Political parties such as the Democratic Party (PD) and the Social Democratic Party (PSD) were entirely new creations, and even though they received significant attention and some high profile support, including from Xanana Gusmão, they could not match FRETILIN in terms of organisational structure or leadership recognition.[64] Furthermore, the decision of Xanana Gusmão not to create a new political party and to focus instead on winning the Presidency facilitated FRETILIN's subsequent success, as he was one of the few political leaders who could have mobilised a significant challenge to FRETILIN at this time.[65]

Consequently, the causal chain the leads to the outcome of the 2001 elections is not one that contains a significant role for the UN. The political and personal differences within the CNRT ensured that it lacked the cohesion to continue as a unified political force once the Indonesian occupation had ended, after which FRETILIN assumed a dominant position that had much more to do with its role as the primary pro-independence political movement than any international contribution. The questionable nature of assertions that the UN contributed significantly to the outcome of the 2001

[63] Multiple Timorese interviewees during a fieldwork trip to Dili in September 2010 cited FRETILIN's historic record as Timor's pro-independence party and its long-standing organisational structures as principal reasons for its electoral success in 2001.
[64] For profiles of Timor's political parties at this time, see Pat Walsh, 'East Timor's Political Parties And Groupings', Australian Council for Overseas Aid, April 2001.
[65] Xanana Gusmão ultimately did create a political party in 2007, also named the CNRT. The new party went on to become the second largest party in Timor in the 2007 parliamentary elections, delivering Xanana Gusmão the Prime Ministership of a coalition government in the process.

elections can also be established through the use of counterfactual analysis. The suggestion that UNTAET contributed to the size of FRETILIN's victory only holds if it is also plausible that FRETILIN would have done less well in the 2001 elections if UNTAET had been absent. While it is impossible to predict election results in a hypothetical moment in the past, I argue that it is difficult to imagine FRETILIN doing less well in East Timor's 2001 elections even without the UN presence (holding all other things equal). As outlined above, there is little evidence to suggest that the party owed its success to the UN, and counterfactual possibilities do not suggest a substantially different election result. On the contrary, had the UN not been present during the transitional period, it is possible that FRETILIN would have had an even greater victory in the polls because the electoral system would likely have been different. One of the effects that the UNTAET mission did have during the transition period was to encourage local leaders to select a mixed electoral system that included a major proportional representation element, even though FRETILIN favoured a majoritarian system.[66] Had a majoritarian system been selected, FRETILIN would have significantly increased their parliamentary presence. An indicator of this probability is that among the 13 seats that were elected according to a majoritarian first-past-the-post system in East Timor's districts, FRETILIN won 12.[67] Had that pattern been replicated in a purely majoritarian system for all seats, FRETILIN truly would have dominated Timorese politics with nearly total representation in the assembly. Consideration of the counterfactual scenario thus suggests that causal claims linking the UN state-building mission to the emergence of a dominant, and authoritarian, one-party system in East Timor are wide of the mark.

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[66] Tansey, *Regime-Building* pp.86/7, and Simon Chesterman, 'East Timor in Transition: Self-Determination, State-Building, and the United Nations', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2002, pp. 45–76.

[67] For a discussion of the 2001 election results, see Anthony L. Smith, 'East Timor: Elections in the World's Newest Nation', *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 15, Number 2, April 2004, pp. 145-159.

The 2006 Crisis: Locating the Chain of Responsibility

A second argument regarding the legacies of state-building in East Timor concerns a crisis that broke out in 2006 and its implications for how the UN missions should be evaluated. As discussed above, in the years after independence was granted in 2002 East Timor was initially viewed by many as a success case for the UN. However, events in 2006 highlighted serious weaknesses in East Timor's state structures and led some to reassess the impact of the UN presence. The crisis began in January 2006 when a group of soldiers submitted a petition to the President and the head of the army alleging systematic discrimination within the army against soldiers from the western part of the country by those from the east. Several hundred 'petitioners' left their posts, and after some weeks, the protesters were dismissed by the head of the army. Subsequent demonstrations became violent, and the situation deteriorated during early 2006 into a generalised breakdown of law and order, entailing the near disintegration of both the armed forces and the police, as well as the death of 38 people and the displacement of approximately 150,000. The crisis culminated in the resignation of Mari Alkatiri as Prime Minister, as well as the Ministers for Defence and Interior, and the deployment of a new Australian-led peacekeeping force, ISF, and a new UN mission (UNMIT) that was mandated to oversee security and political development.[68]

The 2006 crisis led to a reappraisal of international state-building efforts in East Timor, and some recent evaluations have been more critical of the UN legacy.[69] One of

[68] See UN Security Council Resolution 1704, 25 August 2006. For the UN's own account of the crisis and its causes, see 'Report of the Secretary-General on Timor-Leste pursuant to Security Council resolution 1690 (2006)', S/2006/628, 8 August 2006.

[69] For example, see Edith Bowles and Tanja Chopra, 'East Timor: State-building Revisited', in Charles T. Call and Vanessa Wyeth (eds), *Building States to Build Peace*, (Lynne Rienner, 2008).

the clearest examples comes in Charles Call's recent evaluation of a range of UN peace-building missions, in which Call concludes that the need for a new peacekeeping mission after the wake of the 2006 crisis in East Timor requires that the initial UN presence should be viewed as a peace-building failure.[70] However, there are problems with evaluations such as these that attribute responsibility for the 2006 crisis to the UN *unless* they can clearly show how the chain of responsibility links UN actions to the violent events. As discussed above, it is not appropriate to evaluate any international mission with reference to particular outcomes unless it can be established that the mission is in some way responsible for those outcomes. Although Call provides a thorough discussion of his choice of standards, his approach fails to establish empirically whether the standards of success being measured are actually causally related to the missions that are being evaluated. Even if the individual standards may be measured to perfection, without some evidence that those indicators are actually related in some way to the mission being evaluated, the exercise is inherently limited.

With respect to the 2006 crisis and its implications for evaluations of the UN presence in East Timor, identifying a chain of causal responsibility linking the UN to the crisis is far from clear-cut. The 2006 crisis had multiple and complex causes, and an examination of the process leading up to the crisis suggests that it may be too simplistic to treat the crisis as a failure of the UN. There are a wide range of contributing causes of the crisis, including both the proximate causes that played a role in the period immediately prior to the emergence of the crisis itself, as well as a number of deeper underlying causes related to the structural features of East Timorese politics and society. Among these latter structural causes are the legacies of Portuguese and Indonesian

[70] Call, 'Knowing Peace When You See It'.

occupation which created lasting political divisions within East Timor,[71] deep socio-economic inequalities associated with poverty, lack of development and a large youth population,[72] and an acute land ownership problem created by a history of forced internal displacement coupled with multiple and competing property ownership regimes.[73] By 2006, many of the high expectations associated with independence four years earlier had also been disappointed, as initial aspirations and optimism had given way to increasing frustrations with the realities of limited development, overseen by a Mari Alkatiri-led government that was increasingly perceived as corrupt and unresponsive.[74]

However, while these underlying factors were no doubt important in setting the context for the 2006 crisis, the violence that erupted was by no means structurally determined. Rather, it occurred due to the actions and interactions of identifiable individuals and groups, and unfolded progressively over a number of months that contained several critical junctures that directed events towards the violent outcome that occurred. The remainder of this section thus focuses primarily on these elite and group dynamics, and explores the key decisions that were made that contributed to the crisis.

In seeking to identify the causal chain leading to the final outcome, it can be helpful to distinguish between two stages of the crisis. The first is the emergence of discontent with the armed forces and the rise to prominence of the petitioners. The second concerns the subsequent trajectory of events related to the petitioners, in which an army protest degenerated into a generalized breakdown of law and order across the state. While the UN can quite easily be implicated in the first phase, particularly due to the

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[71] See Peter Carey 'East Timor: Sectarian Violence and the Challenge of Nation-building' *The Word*, available at http://www.theword.ie/cms/publish/article_500.shtml

[72] Matthew B. Arnold 'Who is My Friend, Who is My Enemy'? Youth and State-building in Timor-Leste', *International Peacekeeping*,16:3, 2009, 379-392.

[73] James Scambary, 'Anatomy of a conflict: the 2006 – 2007 communal violence in East Timor', *Conflict, Security & Development*, 9:2 June 2009; Andrew Harrington, 'Ethnicity, Violence, & Land and Property Disputes in Timor-Leste', *East Timor Law Journal*, 2, 2007.

[74] Richard Curtain, 'Crisis in Timor-Leste: Looking Beyond the Surface Reality for Causes and Solutions', Australian National University: State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project Working Paper, 2006/1.

oversight role it held when the newly-created Defence Forces of East Timor (F-FDTL) and National Police Force of East Timor (PNTL) were established, the transformation from an army crisis into a state crisis is one that is almost exclusively the result of domestic rather than international dynamics. The causal chain linking UN actions to political outcomes in 2006 thus essentially stops at a relatively early stage of the crisis. Similarly, consideration of a counterfactual scenario suggests how the crisis might have been avoided, not through alternative international action, but rather through alternative action by national politicians and officials.

From Protest to Crisis: Identifying the Causal Chain

The first stage of the crisis involved the emergence of the petitioners and their demonstrations against perceived discrimination within the armed forces. For many observers, the grievances of the petitioners were inextricably linked to the manner in which the armed forces were established, and in particular the methods by which its soldiers were recruited from the ranks of the resistance army, FALINTIL. During the UN administration, it was decided that a new national army should be created, the F-FDTL. Recruitment for the defence forces proved controversial, however, and it has been suggested that Xanana Gusmão persuaded UNTAET to allow Falantil to oversee the process.[75] In the initial phase of recruitment, F-FDTL's ranks were primarily filled with Falantil veterans, and particularly those from the east of the country where the resistance had remained strongest throughout the Indonesian occupation. In a move that would lay the foundation for future divisions, subsequent recruits were predominantly comprised of young Timorese without a background in Falantil, many of whom were from the west of the country. For some, this process undermined the integrity of the

[75] See the Report of the Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste, October 2006, para 25.

security services and reflected flawed UN oversight. According to Ludovic Hood, the UN 'essentially absconded' from its obligations to oversee development of the defence force, and failed to provide or ensure proper civilian oversight. The UN's lack of oversight of the recruitment procedures for F-FDTL facilitated politicization of the process and set a poor precedent for civilian oversight of the armed forces, which remained weak in subsequent years.[76] Consequently, it can be argued that the UN can be linked with the emergence of the fissures that triggered the crisis, and thus shares some responsibility for its emergence.

However, it is also the case that the crisis itself did not unfold as a direct result of the emergence of the petitioners. Rather, the early army protests only degenerated into a full-scale political and security sector crisis during a second stage of events in which the security forces began to disintegrate and law and order broke down among the civilian population. Arguably, these latter developments only took place as a result of the mishandling of the initial petitioner protests by the Timorese political elite, which made crucial decisions that served to raise rather than diffuse tensions. Three decisions in particular helped contribute to the emergence of a wider crisis of the state after the petitioner protests emerged.

The first decision was one of the most significant moments in the episode, and involved the initial dismissal of the petitioners on 16 March 2006. In the days after the petition was first delivered, an effort was made to deal with the grievances through the establishment of a commission of inquiry. However, these efforts quickly failed, in part because the commission included army members named by the petitioners as among those carrying out the alleged discrimination. Subsequent interventions by the President also failed to achieve any settlement, and after the numbers of petitioners had swelled

[76] Ludovic Hood, 'Security Sector Reform in East Timor, 1999 – 2004', *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.13, No.1, March 2006, pp.60 – 77.

and were refusing to return to their barracks, the Chief of the Defence Forces dismissed 594 soldiers, a number that amounted to over a third of the total number of F-FDTL members. According to the head of the F-FDTL, Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak, the decision to dismiss the soldiers was the only option available: 'we had given them every chance. What else could I do?'[77] The decision was also made with the support of Prime Minister Alkatiri, who spoke in favour of the dismissal, and has been criticised for being heavy-handed and insular throughout this period.[78] However, President Gusmão was not involved in the decision and heavily criticised the move (see below). There has also been criticism that the dismissal decision was taken without due process, and that it heightened tensions when other actions might have helped resolve the dispute. The Independent Special Commission of Inquiry into the crisis lamented the lack of any procedure for processing and redressing grievances within the F-FDTL, and criticised the armed forces for the timing and nature of the dismissals. Suggesting that the dispute might have been resolved with a swifter and more comprehensive to address the grievances of the petitioners, the Commission concluded 'the discharge decision undertaken without appropriate procedures contributed significantly to the build-up of tension and highlighted significant institutional weaknesses'.[79] The decision was thus clearly a critical juncture in the transition that took place from army protests to state-wide crisis.

A second critical intervention took place when President Gusmão gave a televised speech in response to the dismissals on 23 March. In the speech, the President acknowledged that the decision was legal and made clear that his intention was not to undo it. However, he also described it as incorrect and unjust, and criticised the

[77] ICG, 'Resolving Timor-Leste's Crisis', Asia Report N°120, 10 October 2006, p.8.
[78] Michael J. Butler, 'Ten Years After: (Re)Assessing Neo-Trusteeship and UN State-building in Timor-Leste', *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol.13, Issue 1, 2012, pp.85-104.
[79] Report of the Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste, October 2006, para.144.

dismissals for focusing on military discipline rather than looking at the roots of the problem that petitioners were raising.[80] Crucially, the speech also included an outline of the petitioners' arguments regarding discrimination within the army that included quotations from the original petition. The president called on the army to address the behaviour of veterans of FALINTIL within the F-FDTL and to ensure that they were not provided with a special status.

The speech had two important implications. First, by repeating the petitioners' claims it gave national attention to the idea of east/west divisions and discrimination within the army. In essence, the President had taken the manner in which the petitioners had framed a security-sector dispute and given it national prominence. Second, the speech also appeared to legitimise the petitioners' allegations, as the President's decision to quote directly from the petition suggested his approval of their grievances and his opposition to the stance of Prime Minister.[81] In the immediate aftermath of the speech, rates of inter-communal violence in East Timor spiked and also took on a distinctly regional character, in which groups formed around either 'eastern' or 'western' identities and clashed along regional lines. According to some, the speech played a direct role in inflaming the situation and contributing to increased rates of inter-communal violence.[82]

A third key decision took place on April 28, the final day of a week-long series of protests held by the petitioners outside the government building in Dili. During the course of the demonstrations, the petitioners had been joined by youth groups who sympathised with the petitioners but who also had separate grievances against the government. On 28 April, the numbers of protestors rose and violence broke out; the

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[80] Speech by Xanana Gusmao, 23 March 2006, available at: http://www.nautilus.org/publications/essays/apsnet/reports/2006/east-timor-military

[81] ICG, 'Resolving Timor-Leste's Crisis'.

[82] Interview with UN and national officials, Dili, September 2010. According to the director of a Timorese conflict research centre, the speech immediately 'blew the country up', while a senior and long-standing UN official suggested that on the night the speech was made 'the place went up in flames'.

government buildings were attacked, police officers fled and the violence led to two civilians deaths and several injuries. During the course of the day, and in response to the collapse in the PNTL's policing abilities, the Prime Minister called in the F-FDTL to deal with the petitioners, and both the army and police sought to keep order during the course of the night.[83] However, the decision to use the F-FDTL to clamp down on the petitioner protests proved highly controversial, both in terms of the constitutional legality of the order and of the political implications on the ground. The use of the remaining members of the F-FDTL to clamp down on the petitioners who had been dismissed helped reinforce the east/west divisions that had become increasingly resonant in the wider Timorese community and directly prompted a further army split that would have long-term consequences. Within days of the deployment of the F-FDTL, the Commander of the Military Police, Alfredo Reinado, left his post in protest at the use of the F-FDTL against the petitioners and created a new armed movement that was to go on to have several violent clashes with both the F-FDTL and the police force.[84] The military deployment also antagonised the relationship between the army and the police, and subsequent violent clashes between the PNTL and F-FDTL became some of the worst of the crisis.[85] The decision to deploy the F-FDTL thus contributed to an escalation of the crisis and exacerbated the political tensions within the public and the political class. The President had not been informed of the decision, the legality of the decision was contested and the aggressive nature of the F-FDTL patrols fuelled tensions in the streets.[86]

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[83] Report of the Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste, October 2006, paras 38-56.
[84] Reinado's rebel group remained a threat to security long after the 2006 crisis, and subsequently led the assassination attempt on President Ramos-Horta in February 2008. The President was seriously injured and Reinado was killed in the attack.
[85] ICG, 'Resolving Timor-Leste's Crisis', pp.11-13.
[86] Report of the Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste, October 2006, para 145.

These decisions each contributed significantly and cumulatively to the development of the crisis in 2006, and were each critical points in the causal chain leading from the initial emergence of the petitioners' protests to the worst of the violence that took place in April and May and that prompted the deployment of a renewed international peacekeeping force. The entirety of the 2006 Crisis can not be understood without appreciation of both deep-rooted structural causes as well as the more elite-level factors emphasised here. However, highlighting the key decision points in early 2006 demonstrates the crucial role of national-level decision-makers, and raises questions over assessments that identify the crisis as a failure of the UN. Considering how the initial army grievances might have been handled differently also suggests that this 'UN failure' could have been avoided with alternative *national* level policies.

Avoiding the Worst: Exploring the counterfactual

The complex causal chain presented above also suggests ways in which counterfactual analysis can be used to clarify the causes of the crisis. By considering a hypothetical scenario in which some of the purported causes of the civil conflict are altered or removed, it becomes possible to gain some analytical leverage on their relative weight.

First, considering alternative policies and practices by the UN missions in East Timor highlights the ways in which they might share some responsibility for the 2006 crisis. One of the arguments that links the UN to the crisis concerns its limited oversight of the recruitment process for the F-FDTL. Consideration of a counterfactual case regarding this action does suggest a plausible alternative scenario in which the UNTAET mission actively sought to ensure an equal balance among eastern and western recruits in the first F-FDTL battalion, as well as a balance between young recruits and veteran FALINTIL fighters. Such a policy may have helped reduce the chances for the emergence of

factional tensions within armed forces, and may have removed the central trigger of the subsequent crisis, namely the emergence of the petitioners.

However, as suggested above, the divisions within the F-FDTL were not sufficient for the outbreak of the crisis itself, which was rather the result of a combination of those divisions, the emergence of the petitioners and, crucially, the handling of the petitioner protests. Exploring alternative scenarios that might have taken place after the petitioner protests began thus gives a better a sense of how the crisis itself might have been avoided. Although a comprehensive counterfactual exploration of multiple alternative scenarios is beyond the scope of this article, it can quickly be established that had each of the three key political decisions explored above been handled differently, then the crisis could very plausibly have been averted even after the petitioner protests had begun. First, the political developments within East Timor might have transpired very differently in 2006 if the petitioners' initial grievances had been dealt with differently. In the immediate aftermath of the emergence of the petition, the army sought to establish a commission of inquiry into the grievances. However, the commission included members against whom complaints had been made, and the move thus undermined potential for an early resolution to the conflict. Furthermore, the decision to dismiss the petitioners en masse was not supported by the full political elite and escalated the tensions considerably. Had the army leadership addressed the grievances of the petitioners and held off on dismissing such a large proportion of the F-FDTL, then the initial crisis may have been contained and resolved within the security sector, and the state-wide crisis may have been avoided. Second, while Prime Minister Alkatiri received much criticism for endorsing the dismissals of the petitioners, the televised speech given by President Gusmão in response to the dismissals is widely perceived to have inflamed the situation unnecessarily, and essentially nationalised a dispute that was until that point primarily limited to the security sector. Had the President not made the speech, or had he made a speech taking a more

even-handed approach that did not so clearly endorse and reinforce the 'east versus west' element of the petitioners' complaints, the rhetoric and ideas of the east/west dispute may have been contained within the security services, rather than being mapped on to national-level debates, where they helped fuel national-level tensions. Finally, the decision of the Prime Minister to call on the F-FDTL to perform civilian law enforcement duties and essentially police the petitioners' protests also exacerbated the situation and contributed to rising tensions. Had the maintenance of civil law and order been left to the police rather than the army, or had the army exercised more restraint in its duties while deployed, further deterioration of the situation, including the breakaway rebellion of Alfredo Reinado, may have been avoided.

Counterfactual analysis has clear limitations, and the exploration of hypothetical alternative scenarios that *might* have taken place cannot identify causal patterns with full accuracy. Nonetheless, they can suggest the relative importance of different causal factors and highlight the ways in which distinct developments might have contributed to an overall outcome. In the case of the 2006 crisis in East Timor, a consideration of alternative trajectories suggests that the legacies of UNTAET's administration played a role in the emergence of the petitioner protests. Had UNTAET played a more active role in overseeing and managing the recruitment of F-FDTL, then the entire problem may never have arisen. However, an important distinction must be made between the emergence of the petitioner protests and the deterioration of that initial security-sector problem into a wider crisis of the state. Considerations of alternative scenarios suggests that it was domestic rather than international factors that, had they transpired differently, might have led to the resolution of the initial dispute without the subsequent violence and social and political unrest. Certainly, other counterfactual scenarios could be examined for East Timor (dealing, for example, with alternative trajectories regarding

UN training of the police force rather than the military,[87] or in election outcomes that might have led to other political leaders other than than those in power at the time), but the scenarios examined here represent three of the critical junctures that led from security sector tensions to state-level crisis.

Both an analysis of the causal chain leading to the eventual outcomes, as well as consideration of the counterfactual scenarios, thus suggest that analyses that represent the 2006 crisis as a failure of the UN are flawed. The UN might have had the opportunity to neutralise some of the intra-army divisions through a more forceful oversight of the F-FDTL's initial recruitment, but once the petitioner issue emerged the dynamics that directed subsequent events towards a breakdown of state institutions and law and order were fundamentally domestically driven. Declaring the UN a failure in East Timor due to the events of 2006 thus fails to take into account the real chain of causal responsibility that led to the eventual outcome, and over-simplifies what was ultimately a complex inter-play of international and primarily domestic dynamics.

Conclusion

Efforts to assess the legacies of state-building and to establish whether individual international operations were successes or failures face a number of obstacles. Principal among them is identifying the causal connections between international actions and the domestic political conditions that subsequently emerge. The state-building literature is familiar with this challenge and some contributions seek to develop research designs that increase the possibility of identifying such causal connections. In some sectors, however,

[87] The UN role in the establishment of the PNTL has also been criticized, as its initial recruits included many former Indonesian police officers, leading to considerable resentment among, and tensions with, ex-FALINTIL fighters. See Scambary, 'Anatomy of a conflict', p.270.

causal claims are made about the impact of international operations that are not well supported by causal analysis, and evaluations about success or failure are made that do not clearly demonstrate the lines of causal responsibility.

This article argues that it is only reasonable to evaluate international state-building operations on the basis of the domestic conditions that they are causally responsible for bringing about. Establishing the necessary chain of causal responsibility is a challenge that should be addressed much more directly, and that requires much more explicit attention to methodological questions. Three qualitative methodological tools in particular – process tracing, counterfactual analysis and the use of control cases – can help increase confidence in causal claims and should be used more frequently in the state-building literature. By using some or all of these tools in analysis of state-building legacies, conclusions regarding the ultimate impact of international interventions can be substantially strengthened.

Although the implications of doing so in the East Timor case is to raise questions over claims that the United Nations left damaging legacies in its wake, the aim here is not to exonerate the UN, or to present an apology or defence of international state-building. Rather, the goal is methodological, and relates simply to the need for greater methodological awareness, debate and rigor in the efforts to establish the domestic legacies of international interventions. Too often, domestic conditions that follow in the wake of international interventions are assumed to follow *as a result* of international interventions. Yet it is often the case that even in the most authoritative of international missions, domestic political elites retain significant levels of formal and informal political power, and can profoundly shape the direction of national politics. Consequently, it is essential that international legacies are disentangled from domestic legacies, and that an accurate picture of the international impact is excavated and traced from the complex web of national political developments that follow outside intervention. For this to

happen, we not only have to think carefully about the standards by which we measure international success or failure, but also about the methods we use to ensure that the indicators we are measuring are in fact the legacies of the missions we are evaluating, and not in fact the result of powerful, autonomous and enduring domestic environments and actors.